

Remarks/Arguments:

In the October 17, 2003 Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 20 and 23-31 pending in the application and objected to claims 25-29. The Examiner further stated that claims 25-29 would be allowable if rewritten or amended to overcome the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, set forth in the Office Action. This Response cancels claims 23-24, without prejudice or disclaimer, amends claim 25, and presents new claims 32-33 for consideration. After entry of the foregoing amendments, claims 20 and 25-33 (3 independent claims; 10 total claims) remain pending in the application. Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Claims 23-29 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter of the invention. In particular, the Examiner states that several phrases in claim 23 are vague, indefinite, and/or awkwardly or confusingly worded. Further, the Examiner stated that with respect to claim 25, line 5, "It is not readily apparent as to how the workpieces are retrieved from the third station without previously being placed at the third station." In response to the Examiner's rejections, Applicants have cancelled claim 23 and amended claim 25 to more accurately define the invention.

Claims 20, 30, and 31 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Bacchi et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,360,144, issued March 19, 2002 (hereinafter "Bacchi"). In particular, the Examiner stated that Bacchi discloses a wafer handling system comprising a six axis robot having an operative end, a dry wafer gripping device attached to the operative end having a dry end-effector, and a wet wafer gripping device attached to the robot operative end having a wet end-effector. The Examiner further states that each of the end-effectors in Bacchi can be used to grip both dry and wet wafers and refers Applicants to Figures 1B, 1A, and 3, column 2, lines 52-58, column 4, lines 65-67 and column 6, lines 26-44 in Bacchi. The Examiner further states that with respect to claim 31, the dry end-effector and the wet end-effector can be oriented substantially orthogonal to each other as specifically shown in Figure 3 of Bacchi. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

35 U.S.C. §102(e) states that, "A person shall be entitled to a patent unless the invention was described in a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention thereof by the applicant for patent, or on an international application

by another who has fulfilled the requirements of paragraph (1), (2) and (4) of §371(c) of this title before the invention thereof by the applicant for patent." The standard for lack of novelty, that is, for "anticipation", is one of strict identity. "It is axiomatic that for prior art to anticipate under §102 it has to meet every element of the claimed invention, and that such a determination is one of fact." Hybertech, Inc. v. Monoclonal Antibodies, Inc., 802 F.2d 1367, 231 U.S.P.Q. 81, 90 (5th Cir. 1986).

Bacchi generally discloses a self-teaching robot arm positioning method that compensates for support structure component alignment offset which entails the use of a component emulating fixture having mounting features that are matable to support structure mounting elements. Moreover, Bacchi specifically discloses "two similar but independently controllable 3-link robot arm mechanisms 10L and 10R" that are "rotatably mounted at opposite ends of a torso link 11, which is mounted to the top surface of a base housing 12 for rotation about a central or torso axis 13." Bacchi further defines the robot arm mechanisms 10L and 10R as being mirror images of one another which have corresponding components identified by identical reference numerals followed by the respective suffixes "L" and "R" (see column 6, lines 14-25 and Figs. 1A, 1B, 1C, and 2-3). In contrast, Applicants' claimed system includes a six axis robot having an operative end where both a dry wafer gripping device and a wet wafer gripping device are attached to the same operative end of the six axis robot. Unlike Applicants' claimed device, Bacchi discloses controllable 3-link robot arm mechanisms that are rotatably mounted on opposite ends of a torso link 11 which comprises part of the robot.

Accordingly, in that Bacchi fails to disclose each and every element of Applicants' claimed invention, Bacchi cannot anticipate Applicants' claimed invention. Therefore, Applicant respectfully requests the Examiner's withdrawal of his 35 U.S.C. §102(e) rejection.

Claims 23 and 24 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Nanbu et al., U.S. Patent No. 5,565,034, issued in October 1996 (hereinafter "Nanbu") in view of Bacchi. In particular, the Examiner states that Nanbu discloses a method for robotically transferring semiconductor wafers between a plurality of stations of a machine for performing multiple operations on the wafers using a robot for handling wafers where the method includes: transporting wafers having surface contaminants from a first station of the machine to another location with the robot, and transporting "dry" wafers with the robot from a second station of the machine to another location. Although the Examiner concedes that Nanbu fails to disclose using


a robot equipped with two end-effectors for handling wafers, the Examiner contends that Bacchi discloses using a robot equipped with two end-effectors for effectively transporting wafers efficiently from any location in an available work space and that it therefore would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to replace the robot in Nanbu with a robot equipped with two end-effectors as taught by Bacchi.

Applicants have cancelled claims 23 and 24, without prejudice or disclaimer, and therefore consider this rejection by the Examiner to be moot.

In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that all of the pending claims fully comply with 35 USC § 112 and are allowable over the prior art of record. Reconsideration of the Application and allowance of all pending claims is earnestly solicited. Should the Examiner wish to discuss any of the above in greater detail or deem that further amendment should be made to improve the form of the claims, then the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the Examiner's convenience.

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Respectfully submitted,

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